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BOOK REVIEWS.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF NIETZSCHE. By A. Wolf, D.Lit. London: Constable and Company, 1915. Pp. 116.

Nietzsche is one of those writers whose philosophy evaporates when detached from its literary qualities, and whose literature owes its charm not alone to the personality and wisdom of the man, but to a claim to scientific truth. Such authors have always a peculiar influence over the large semi-philosophical public, who are spared the austere effort of criticism required by either metaphysics or literature, by either Spinoza or Stendhal; who enjoy the luxury of confounding, and avoid the task of combining, different interests.

If Nietzsche is a philosopher of this hybrid kind, it is instructive to view the result when a professional philosopher of the competence of Dr. Wolf attempts an introduction to his philosophy, omitting all detail of Nietzsche's career, and with little reference to his extra-philosophic interests. In this short series of lectures, interestingly, if rather carelessly written, Dr. Wolf has given us an admirable piece of simplification; in one hundred and sixteen pages he has presented an excellent outline of all that is strictly philosophic in Nietzsche's writings.

The first twenty-one pages are taken up with a discussion of Nietzsche's views on war. Dr. Wolf, naturally, is concerned to show that Nietzsche maintained no philosophy of militarism. This contention he easily proves by quotation. What he does not show, and what, from the title of the book, we might call upon him to show, is that Nietzsche had *any* philosophic view upon the subject, or did anything beyond voicing all the conflicting judgments which occur to every thoughtful person. It is not sufficient that Nietzsche had "no perverted taste for cruelty or slaughter" (p. 21). If this is all that Dr. Wolf can say for him, we do not find, at least on the subject of war, that "the broad outlines of Nietzsche's thought . . . are clear enough to the careful reader" (p. 41), for there were simply no broad outlines at all.

We leave Chapter IV (Nietzsche's Theory of Knowledge) with the suspicion that the simplification has simplified the philosophy away. Dr. Wolf assures us that Nietzsche had a theory of knowledge. "The main point, I take it, is to bring out the human

'perspective' involved in all human 'knowledge,' somewhat as Kant and others had done before him, only more so" (p. 53). Nietzsche is "inclined to suspect the validity of all human knowledge" (p. 95). He holds it "beyond the range of possibilities for an instrument to criticise properly its own fitness" (p. 44). Sometimes he holds that the mind alters things; sometimes that there is no other nature than that we know. Sometimes truth is docile and pragmatist; sometimes hostile and to be avoided. Dr. Wolf has well summarised these views, but hardly convinces us that they form a "theory of knowledge."

In treating Nietzsche's theory of the universe, Dr. Wolf is more successful. Correctly, we think, he holds Nietzsche's view of nature to be essentially Schopenhauerian. It is not clear as to how nearly Nietzsche comes to making will (to power) or the various centres of will, *ultimate* reality; nor is it clear exactly what his argument against Schopenhauer is. And even in so brief a discussion we should have liked to see Nietzsche's views on evolution and change compared with those of Bergson and James, and to hear more of his attitude toward Darwinism, and something of his affinities with Butler.

In spite of Dr. Wolf's sympathetic treatment, one does not receive the impression that Nietzsche held any consistent moral policy in regard to the cosmic flux. Nor does the last chapter (*Theory of Conduct*) help us very much, though here again we find an excellent summary. The world-will is creative (p. 65) like Bergson's, but, more sincerely than Bergson's, is without sense or promise. Sometimes the world appears malleable in the hands of humanity. Sometimes the will is conceived as something quite unconscious, and consciousness as epiphenomenal. Dr. Wolf's conclusion that Nietzsche "quite consistently decided in favour of a limited freedom of the will" (p. 87) is not altogether convincing.

The last two chapters are the best of the book, though we regret the omission of any account of Nietzsche's views on art, with the interesting pessimism with respect to the future of art evinced in *Human, All-too-Human*.

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